

THE RED DWARF OF RUGEN.

From St. Nicolas for January.
The pleasant Isle of Rugen looks like the Baltic water o'er;
And in its greenwooded beaches the Pomeranian shore;
And in a town of Rambin a little boy and maid
Plucked the meadow-flowers together and in the sea-surf played.

All like were they in beauty, if not in their degree;

He was the Amptman's first-born, the miller's child
was she.

Now of old the Isle of Rugen was full of Dwarfs and Trots.

The brown-faced little Earth-men, the people without souls;

And, for every man and woman in Rugen's island

Walked in air and sunshine, a Troll was underground.

It changed the little maiden one morning strolled away

Among the haunted Nine Hills, where the elves and gobblins play.

That day, in barley fields below, the harvester had known

Of evil voices in the air, and heard the small horns blown.

She came not back; the search for her in field and wood

Was vain; the children, as they crept along the paths,

Their errant host, they cried her west, but she came not again.

"She's down among the Brown Dwarfs," said the dream wife wise and old.

And their prayers were made, and masses said, and Ram-bach's church bell tolled.

Five years her father mourned her, and then John

thus said:

"I will find some little playmate, be she alive or dead."

He watched among the Nine Hills, he heard the Brown Dwarfs sing.

And saw them dance by moonlight merrily in a ring.

And when their gay-robed leaders tossed up his cap of red,

Young Dietrich caught it as fell, and thrust it on his head.

The Troll came crouching at his feet and wept for him.

"Oh give me back my magic cap, for your great head won't."

"Nay," Dietrich said, "the Dwarf who throws his charmed cap away
Must serve his master at his will, and for his folly pay."

"You stole my pretty Lisbeth and hid her in the earth,
Her forth!"

"She will not come; she's one of us; she's mine," the Brown Dwarf said.

"The day is set, the cake is baked, to-morrow we shall wed."

"The foul fiend fetch thee!" Dietrich cried, "and keep thy foul tongue still."

Open, open, to thy evil world, the glass door of the hill!"

The Dwarf observed, and youth and Troll down the long starry passed.

And saw in dim and sunless light a country strange and vast.

Weird, rich and wonderful, he saw the elfin underland, its palaces of precious stones, its streets of golden sand.

He came unto a banquet-hall with tables richly spread, when young maidens served him to his red wine and the bread.

How fair, she seemed among the Trolls so ugly and so wild!

Yet pale and very sorrowful, like one who never smiled!

Her low sweet voice, her gold-brown hair, her tender blue eyes seemed

Like nothing he had seen elsewhere or something he had dreamt.

He looked at her, clasped her in his arms; he knew the long-lost one;

"O Lisbeth! see thy playmate—I am the Amptman's son!"

She leaped her fair head on his breast, and through her soft silk spoke,

"And take me from this evil place and from the elfin folk!"

"And let me tread the grass-green fields and smell the flowers again,

And feel the soft wind on my cheek and hear the dropping rain!"

"And oh, to hear the singing bird, the rustling of the trees;

The lowing cows, the bleat of sheep, the voices of the sea;"

"And oh, upon my father's knee to sit beside the door and hear the bell of vespers ring in Rambin church once more?"

He kissed her cheek, he kissed her lips; the Brown Dwarf groaned to see,

And tore his tangled hair and ground his long teeth angrily.

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